

Slough Town 1, Wycombe Wanderers 0

WYCOMBE Wanderers don't seem to have much luck in the F.A. Trophy — the competition designed to replace the old Amateur Cup (writes Stuart Earp).

Last season the Blues fell at the first hurdle against Ilford and on Saturday a late goal by Slough's Steve Hill put paid to their hopes for this year. A good run in this competition is vital to clubs like Wycombe, and Wanderers will undoubtedly feel the pinch once their F.A. Cup run is over.

For years, Slough and Wycombe have been rivals and this 1-0 reverse completed a hat-trick for the Rebels this season. They beat Wanderers 1-0 and 4-3 in the Rothmans Isthmian League. It could be four in a row, too, if the clubs come up against each other in the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup — Wycombe fans would never live it down!

Strangely enough, I would venture to say Wycombe are a superior team man for man than Slough and yet the Rebels have won on each occasion this year. Slough's secret is their team spirit. They seem to raise their game far more than Wanderers in these matches and it is their will to win and put one over their rivals that has brought their success.

That team spirit, much in evidence when they won 4-3 at Wexham Park after trailing 3-1, was there again on Saturday. Slough never stopped running, chasing and hoping for the odd slice of luck that would tip the balance. In the end their perseverance paid off.

It could all have been very different had Wycombe accepted a couple of golden scoring chances but once they found themselves a goal down, they seemed to accept defeat with an air of inevitability. Certainly, there was no great fight back in the last few minutes. Perhaps the thought of Monday's second F.A. Cup replay with Bedford weighed heavily on their minds.

As a spectacle the match was scrappy, a soft pitch making control difficult and neither side allowing each other time or space. As a result mistakes abounded and it was predictably an error which decided the game.

Wanderers had to reshuffle their team for the umpteenth time due to injury. As expected, John Delaney was unfit and Dave Bullock took over at centre back. Derek Cotterill came in at right back and was to prove one of Wycombe's few successes on the day.

The match started at a furious pace and both Terry Brown and Howard Kennedy tested the respective goalkeepers inside the first 10 minutes as play swung from end to end. Then John Maskell saved Wycombe in the 12th minute. Barrie Davies floated over a free kick which Hill headed firmly towards the corner of the net. Maskell flung himself to his right and tipped the ball away for a corner.

With Wycombe's attacks breaking up inside the Slough penalty area, it was the Rebels who looked the more dangerous side and nobody at Wexham Park will know how they didn't score in an amazing goalmouth scramble after 27 minutes. It went something like this: An attempted Wycombe clearance hit Barrie Davies and bounced into the penalty area. Maskell came out but misjudged the bounce and the ball flew over his leap. Brown sent in a shot which was blocked, Maskell dived at the ball and lost possession and after a series of shots and clearances, the ball was eventually cleared for a corner.

Slough, spurred on by those vociferous brothers Roy and Barrie Davies, continued to look dangerous until Wycombe hit back with a short burst of power just before half time. Geoff Anthony, the Blues most effective front runner in the first half, tested Paul Barron with a swerving shot and the keeper foiled the visitors again in the 39th minute.

This was Wycombe's best move of the match. Anthony sent a perfect ball through Slough's defence to Dylan Evans on the right. He ran on and slipped a pass inside to Tony Horseman, who had made a diagonal run across the box. 'Bodger' controlled well and slipped one defender which left him with only Barron to beat. The keeper, however, was off his line in a flash and blocked the shot.

Slough, who fell away badly in the first half, opened the second with renewed spirit. They soon won a corner which John Beyer headed past Maskell but Kennedy was on the line to hack the ball away.

Wanderers had the best chance of the match in the 63rd minute. Cotterill sent a deep cross over the defence to the far post. Evans got up well to head back across goal and there was Mick Holifield in a space with only Barron in front of him five yards out. He could have placed the ball anywhere but he sent his header just within the goalkeeper's reach. Barron launched himself acrobatically and tipped the ball over the top.

A goal then and Wycombe might have been home and dry. They missed their chance, however, and Slough came back with a vengeance. Two minutes after Dave Alexander had replaced Anthony, the Rebels broke through. A Slough pass was deflected by Kennedy into the path of Hill. A yard clear of Keith Mead, Hill made the most of his advantage by leaving the Blues skipper in his wake and planting a shot wide of the advancing goalkeeper. Mead must have been in two minds to bring Hill down but he decided against an automatic booking.

Reardon, however, had his name taken by referee Daryl Reeves after 80 minutes when he lost the ball on half way and used his arms to try and regain possession from Hill. The incident summed up Wycombe's frustrations.

Slough looked distinctly the better side in the last quarter, the goal lifting them visibly. Brown and Hill both all arms and legs but awkward customers nonetheless, caused Wycombe more and more problems as the Rebels sought to put the result beyond doubt.

There was no revival from Wycombe and their passes went astray all too regularly. They had a corner in injury time which Barron bundled away but the final whistle went immediately afterwards to leave Wanderers out of the F.A. Trophy once again.

SLOUGH: P. Barron, T. Turl, J. Beyer, D. Malley, R. Underwood, A. Gané, B. Davies, R. Davies, S. Hill, T. Brown, G. Dobson. Sub. W. Roberts (not used).

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, D. Cotterill, D. Bullock, K. Mead, P. Birdseye, H. Kennedy, T. Reardon, M. Holifield, A. Horseman, D. Evans, G. Anthony (sub. D. Alexander 71 mins.).

Referee: D. Reeves (Denham).
Half time: 0-0. **Goalscorer,** Slough — Hill (73).

Blues friendly

WYCOMBE Wanderers have arranged a friendly against Rothmans Hellenic Leaguers Thames United at Loakes Park on Thursday (k.o. 7.30 p.m.). Admission is 20p.

Cardiff trip

JEFFWAYS Travel Ltd. will be running coaches to the Cardiff F.A. Cup game on December 13 for Wycombe Wanderers supporters. Coaches leave at 10 a.m. on Saturday morning and tickets will cost £2.50 for adults and £1.75 for children. Tickets are on sale at their Castle Street offices from 10 a.m.-12 noon, on Sunday morning.